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William John Potts

MEMOIR

OF

William John Potts.

BY

FREDERICK D. STONE.

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MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM JOHN POTTS.

By FREDERICK D. STONE.

(*Read before the American Philosophical Society, December 4, 1896.*)

Over forty years ago, while attending a school kept by the late Thomas D. James, at the corner of Eleventh and Market streets, I remember noticing among the new scholars admitted at the opening of a September term, a bright little boy whose name I afterwards learned was William John Potts. He was my junior by some eighteen months—not a noticeable difference in the age of men, but an all-important one when it forms the barrier that separates a little boy from a big one.

I do not think that we remained schoolfellows very long. I know he left Mr. James' school to attend another, before he had completed his education, but the acquaintance then formed was sufficiently strong to insure a kindly greeting whenever we met, and to ripen into a warm friendship in after years, when we found we were interested in the same pursuits. If, therefore, I should speak of Mr. Potts more as I knew him than as a member of the American Philosophical Society, you must remember that I am moved by a friendship exceeding in years more than half the limit of the allotted life of man.

William John Potts was born in Philadelphia on October 14, 1842. When he was eight years of age, his parents moved to Camden, N. J., where he resided until his death, which took place November 18, 1895. He was the son of Robert Barnhill Potts and Sarah Page Potts, daughter of John Grew, of Boston. On his father's side he was the sixth in descent from David Potts and Alice Croasdale. David Potts, a native of North Wales, was born about 1670, in or

near the ancient town of Langurrig. He was a Quaker either by birth or conviction, and in this faith his descendants remained for generations. About 1690 he came to Pennsylvania, where he died in 1730. Alice Croasdale was one of the six children of Thomas and Agnes Croasdale, who were passengers on the *Welcome* with William Penn when he came to Pennsylvania in 1682. Alice was at that time nine years of age. John, the second son of David and Alice Potts, died in Pennsylvania in 1766. Thomas, the second son of John, was an iron manufacturer. He removed to New Jersey, and was several times a member of the Assembly of that Colony. He died in 1777. His son William Lukens Potts, the father of Robert Barnhill Potts, was also in the iron business. He died in Philadelphia in 1854. Robert Barnhill Potts died near Boston, June 22, 1865.

Mr. Potts was also the seventh in descent from John Hughes, who came here about 1681. He was the ancestor of John Hughes, the friend of Franklin, who brought down a storm of indignation on his own head and that of Hughes, when he had him appointed Stamp-officer for Pennsylvania. Another ancestor of Mr. Potts was Peter Larson Cock, one of our earliest Swedish settlers, who was born in Sweden in 1611 and died in Pennsylvania. He had held office under the Dutch, and was a member of Penn's Council. From him William Penn bought a portion of the site of Philadelphia. Another ancestor was Matts Holstein, who was born in New Sweden in 1644.

Some of Mr. Potts' ancestors, probably the Croasdales, lived in a cave before dwellings were erected in Philadelphia, as I find in one of his letters to the late Henry Armitt Brown on this subject the following: "I have the honor to have descended from a cave-dweller myself." The maternal grandfather of Mr. Potts, John Grew, of Boston, was a native of Birmingham, England, where his ancestors were people of influence, and he, like them, was a man of intelligence.

It will seen from this, that on his father's side William John Potts was a true Pennsylvanian. His progenitors were among her earliest settlers. They held to the faith that brought Penn to this side of the Atlantic, and for several generations were dealing in one of the State's great natural sources of wealth, the development of which has made the name of a Pennsylvanian iron-master known throughout the world.

Mr. Potts' education was begun in Camden and continued in Philadelphia. After leaving the school of Mr. James already mentioned, he attended that of Mr. William Fewsmith, and, subsequently, the lectures on Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania and at the Polytechnic College of Pennsylvania. On leaving this last-named institution, he presented, as a candidate for the degree of Bachelor of Chemistry, an essay on lead. After completing his education, he filled the position of Analytical Chemist, being connected with extensive chemical works which his father had established in Camden. Mr. Potts, however, did not continue for many years in the calling for which he had fitted himself. He was one of those, fortunately or unfortunately situated, as the case may seem, who did not have to work. Fortunately, as it enabled him to follow more congenial pursuits; unfortunately, as it is hardly possible that, with the industry and application that so strongly marked his character, he would not have been successful in the more practical walk of life he at first proposed to follow.

Freed from the exacting demands of business, he threw himself heart and soul into intellectual pursuits, and his various tastes soon led him to take an interest in nearly every branch of science, of art and of literature. I do not mean that he to any extent mastered these subjects, but there were few in which he did not take an intelligent interest. History, and its kindred branches of archæology, numismatics, and genealogy, were at first his more favored studies, and his correspondence before me shows how continually they

engaged his mind. In one letter he describes the opening of some Indian graves, every particular of which he carefully noted. In another, he gives the history of the "Bar Cent," and, in another, discusses with force a vexed genealogical question. To the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* he contributed a list of books to assist Pennsylvania genealogists, which has been frequently referred to. Later in life, however, his love for genealogy was superseded by an interest in philology and folk-lore.

Happy in his domestic surroundings, his house became the gathering-place of friends of kindred tastes, and he was made president of a local art-club or class that met there. He was also president of the "Fortnightly Club," which met at the residences of the members every two weeks, its object being "to promote a liberal spirit in lectures on general subjects." He was subsequently made president of the University Extension movement in Camden, and no one labored more zealously than he did to give his fellow-citizens the most interesting and instructive course of lectures possible.

He was of a shrinking disposition, and even the introduction of speakers at the Fortnightly Club was a trial to him. He wrote, however, that he hoped in time to gain sufficient confidence to keep his feet before an audience with less embarrassment, and looked forward to addressing the Historical Society and the Philosophical Society.

To sum up Mr. Potts' character in a few words, he can be best described as an educated gentleman of broad and liberal tastes, in whose company every one could find pleasure. Although not a college graduate, his education was excellent, and it was supplemented by the advantages of extensive travel, at a time when his mind was open to its broadening influences. Early in 1866, he sailed for Europe, and remained abroad for more than two years. In 1880 he again visited Europe, and did not return until 1882. On his first

trip he visited some of the principal European capitals. His second trip was extended to Norway, Sweden, Russia, Italy, Spain and as far up the Nile as the first cataract.

Mr. Potts was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1885, and of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania on February 28, 1871. At the time of his death he was also a member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society and the New Jersey Historical Society; corresponding member of the Wisconsin Historical Society; member of the English Folk-Lore Society, the American Folk-Lore Society, and the Pennsylvania Sons of the Revolution; charter member of the New Jersey Sons of the Revolution; member of the Society of Colonial Wars for the State of Pennsylvania, and foundation member of the Society of Colonial Wars for the State of New Jersey. During his lifetime he had also been a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences and of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Societies of Philadelphia.

Mr. Potts was a frequent contributor to the London *Notes and Queries*, to the *New England Historic Genealogical Register*, to the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, to the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, to *The Critic*, and to the papers of the day. For the Philosophical Society he prepared, as you know, an excellent memoir of his personal friend, our late member, the Hon. Thomas H. Dudley.

It is unfortunate for Mr. Potts' reputation that he did not confine his interest to one or two subjects, as from his professional training he had acquired a facility for detecting the minutest evidence bearing upon the subject under consideration, and his power of application is shown in the hours he spent over manuscripts and other sources of original information. He had, as one of your members expressed it, "the instincts and methods of a true scholar," but the diversity of his tastes prevented him from becoming so absorbed in one

subject as to present all the facts connected with it in the order required to give them their true value. To a certain extent he lacked the power of concentration. To a friend who met him in the Boston Athenæum, where he was consulting works on a great variety of subjects, and who asked him why he attempted to cover so wide a field, he replied that there were so many interesting things to be examined that if he confined himself to a few, he might lose facts he would never find again. It was the accumulation of knowledge, rather than its use, that moved him. And yet he did use it in the most generous way, namely, in helping others, in which service his life was spent. Nothing gave him more pleasure than the examination of original manuscripts likely to prove of historical value, and as he possessed the faculty of appreciating curious information and was competent to judge of what was important, he seldom failed, when he met with such, to take Captain Cuttle's advice and make a note of it. His note-books thus became storehouses of references, and the generosity with which he drew upon them for the benefit of others is attested by the frequency with which we finds thanks for assistance extended to him in works published within the last twenty years.

It may well be asked if Mr. Potts gave no one of his numerous tastes a prominence over another, and while the answer must be in the negative, so far as his studies were concerned, there was certainly one class of composition in which he excelled, and to which I think he gave a particular attention—I mean the well-nigh lost art of letter-writing.

For this he appears to have had a natural-born taste. Nor am I alone in this opinion: one of his correspondents wrote, "Your letters have a peculiar flavor and special interest;" and such was the verdict of a number who read letters received from him at the Historical Society while he was in Europe. From the earliest letter written by him, that has been preserved, in which, at the age of eight years, he tells

his grandmother of the neighbor's children who threaten to tear up his banner, to the last, written at intervals when he could sufficiently rouse himself for the effort, only a few weeks before his death, all are interesting and bright, with a rich vein of humor running through them that was perfectly characteristic. Nothing can give you a better idea of the man or show better the development of his tastes than his letters.

In one he tells his mother of his collection of jasper and white flint arrow-heads, and hopes she has brought him some stalactites and blind fish from the Mammoth Cave; and then he informs her that he has run short of summer clothes, and has been obliged to wear his great-grandfather's pantaloons, which, being of antique make, and large, flapped about and kept his legs cool.

In another, to the same devoted parent, he asks her not to forget to bring him some minerals, and to thank Aunt Rebecca for the curiosities. A visit to a church is then described, evidently not of the denomination the family usually attended. In it his uncle held a pew. "I saw an expression of pleasure on uncle's countenance," he wrote, "as he escorted father, a vestryman in an Episcopal church, to a place in his sanctuary; and I thought the words of the hymn might be passing through his mind, which read, 'Enter, sinner, ere it be too late,' or possibly the words we read over bridges, 'Keep to the right as the law directs.'"

And then, in another, "Dear mother, don't forget to bring me more specimens."

At about the age of twenty-one he suffered from the poetic fever, and wrote a parody in the measure of "Hiawatha." He is to be pardoned. He could not help it; we all did it. It was in the air, and we took it as we did the measles.

His European letters are all excellent. Those from England in 1866, written shortly after the close of the war, show

the interest that was being awakened there in American affairs, when the people of England realized the strength of our government. There is nothing of the guide-book in these letters. For descriptions you are frequently referred to printed authorities: it is the people with whom he came in contact that he writes about, and you cannot but feel that the views he expresses are those of a close observer.

In speaking of the imperfect knowledge the English had of America, he wrote: "The English people, old and young, need to begin at the beginning. There are some newspapers which do understand the vital principles of our government, but they are so few that they all are not more than four or five in the whole kingdom as far as I know. The *Morning Star* is one which does not hesitate to speak plainly, for only lately I saw some remarkably clear statements in its editorials. In one it said: 'What is an American but an Englishman with a vote in his hand?' also, 'What was the cause of the rebellion of the American Colonies? Taxation without representation!' Turning from the comparison of our people to theirs, crushed with ignorance and pauperism, they ask, 'What is Continental Europe doing? Swiftly advancing towards universal suffrage. Are Englishman to be treated as inferior to the Continental nations they have so long sneered at?' They, the editors of the *Morning Star*, ask, 'Does it injure the people? What made the Americans able to crush the greatest Rebellion that ever existed, but the feeling that each American had, that he himself was a part of the Government and personally responsible for its life and safety?'" His friends, he says, asked a good many questions about our Government, the freedmen, etc., which he explained as well as he could. "I longed," he said, "to have had ability to speak more plainly. I tried to do the best I was able, feeling the above truth very strongly: 'Every American is a part of his Government, and upon himself the life and safety of the nation depend.' Some of

our American friends who have been in England for many years say that since the Rebellion the English have learned much more about America."

"In London, when I first came I noticed a large crowd gazing at something in front of a shop-window, and, as I always had a countryman's taste for a shop-window, I determined to see too. When I got a look, after some crowding and squeezing, what do you think it was? Nothing but a picture of one of our American locomotives. However, I felt a sort of national sympathy for it which repaid me. It was no wonder the English looked upon it as a very chimerical-looking animal, alongside of the funny English engines, which have pipes not much bigger than we use for stoves, and when they whistle it sounds like the shrieks of a woman in hysterics."

The rudeness of the English whom he met on the Continent, who appeared to be perfectly oblivious of others, refusing, or neglecting, to recognize their presence by the slightest inclination of the head, when coming to or leaving the table, excited his intense ire. "Bob and I," he said, "kept up our good American custom of being polite in spite of these people. There was no intention, in their abrupt manner of leaving you, of being rude, but we found that they really did not know any better, any of them."

On his second visit he writes of the Swedes: "I still have the same opinion of the Swedish people. They are much superior to many other European nations; take the average, they are more refined-looking, manly, independent, and neater in their personal appearance than many Europeans. It is a matter of congratulation that our western population will be largely descended from these northern races, who, in this country in particular, have long enjoyed certain political privileges which are denied the people elsewhere, and which make them appreciate fully the duties of republican liberty."

His sturdy Americanism, as shown in these letters, is

delightful. He was ever ready to take up the cudgels for his own country in an argument, but was never offensive, nor was he blind to the unfavorable impressions made by some Americans on the Continent. He was too polite to reply, except in courteous terms, to the ex-Lord Mayor of London, whose acquaintance he made on the Mediterranean, when the said gentleman asked him if Congress and its members were not very corrupt, and then added that his own election to Parliament had cost him five thousand pounds. But he could not shut his eyes to the vulgarity of one of his own countrymen whom he met at Naples, who displayed on a broad shirt-front three large gold studs ; offered to " chalk out " for a lady a route by which she could go up Vesuvius without paying a guide ; and described how the lava on Mount Vesuvius kept " accoomalatin' and accoomalatin' and a-formin' and a-formin'."

From this specimen of humanity he turned to a more congenial acquaintance, whom he spoke of as the Irish Quaker lady, although he had no proof that she was a Quaker beyond a certain plainness of dress. She was from Cork, the niece of a Mr. Richard Sainthill, an antiquary, who had instilled into her his tastes from a child, especially in Greek coins. She took a great interest in numismatics and in the early Irish and Huguenot emigrations to America, and they thus had much in common.

In a letter from Rome, he speaks of a little American girl, who, he said, had ideas of her own and a proper American spirit. An Englishman whom she met described meeting a most agreeable American and his wife, both educated and apparently refined, and the latter very good-looking. " And would you believe it?" said the Englishman, " he gave me his card when we left, as we had been traveling some time together, and he was a portmanteau-maker. Fancy ! Traveling with your portmanteau-maker. I thought he was a man of some note from New York !"

" My bright-spirited little companion," says Mr. Potts, " was equal to the occasion : she replied, ' Mr. So-and-so, did it never occur to you that a portmanteau-maker in America and a portmanteau-maker in England might be two different kinds of men?' The honest Englishman answered, ' I never thought of that before ; I believe you are right.' " Mr. Potts adds : " I could have kissed her on the spot for this well-timed cut—not a very disagreeable thing, for she was not bad-looking."

It may be here said, that it was Mr. Potts' pride in America that led him to take such an active part in the Society of the Sons of the Revolution, as he saw in it the means of preserving a proper American spirit and inculcating in the minds of its members an intelligent interest in the history of their country.

In one of his letters the ruins of Pompeii are graphically described ; in another, a bull-fight at Madrid. In his descriptions of cathedrals you can detect his taste for archæology as well as, to some extent, in his Nile journal. I do not know, however, that his archæological studies included Egyptology, and hardly think such was the case. Certainly his Nile journal treats more of the persons he traveled with — inappropriately dressed Englishwomen with their velvet-trimmed dresses and lace-bedecked parasols, which they carried while riding on donkeys—and of his own experience of riding on a camel, with its hiccoughing effect when the animal began to trot, than of Egyptian antiquities. At Luxor, he was entertained by the British Consul, an Arab who spoke English and several other languages. He had present, for the entertainment of his guests, a party of dancing-girls, who gave several of their famous native dances to strange, wild music. " One does not desire," wrote Mr. Potts, " to see such an exhibition a second time. While clothed to their throats, their movements of the body were of a character that made our ballet modest in comparison.

A gentleman who had been in India said that the movements were the same as those of the Nautch girls." Except from an antiquarian point of view, which connects these dances with an ancient worship, Mr. Potts could see nothing in them of interest, and declined an invitation to another entertainment rather than witness a repetition of the performance.

Nothing was more characteristic of him than his love for books, and while in Europe he more than once expressed himself as feeling lost, away from his study-table, surrounded by his favorite volumes. When a boy at school he met with Channing's well-known passage, which says: "No matter how poor I am, no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling, if the sacred writers will enter, take up their abode under my roof; if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise, and Shakespeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship." Channing was the friend of his mother's family in Boston; and this fact, together with the beauty of the thought, so impressed the passage on his mind, that I find it quoted in full in a letter written in the latter part of his life. The love of books had entered his soul, and it is not therefore surprising that in two of his letters we find descriptions of the Library of the British Museum and of the great National Library in Paris.

As Librarian of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, I had given him a letter of introduction to the officials of the British Museum. I had no personal acquaintance with them, but knowing how courteously they receive students bearing credentials from institutions of learning, I felt that an official letter might be of service to him. The reception he met with was not different from that which any well-accredited person would have received, but is best told in his own words.

"The printed rules of the Library," he wrote, "state that to be a reader one 'must have the letters of two householders or a person of note:' these are the words. I conclude the Librarian of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania must be a great personage. Twenty minutes after I gave your letter (Mr. Stevens not being asked for, though I said I could get one from him), I was sitting at one of the desks in that profound library, a '*Reader for life*' (only think of it!); the great dome above, twenty thousand reference volumes surrounding me, two assistants crowding round me, smiling most graciously and asking, 'How many would I like to have?'—one million three hundred thousand printed books waiting to be called for, with many thousands of manuscripts."

He was disappointed, however, in the pleasure he anticipated in reading in this library. The weather was cold and disagreeable, the reading-room poorly lighted and ventilated, and his general health so affected that he was unable to work for more than three-quarters of an hour a day. In writing on this subject he humorously said: "When ventilated at all, a cold draught cuts across one's back from an occasional door being opened in the gallery. I have bought myself a black velvet skull cap, such as the priests wear to cover their tonsures in the cold European cathedrals. It is a very useful article, and has a most foreign look, and if you have any draughts in the Society's rooms I shall honor you, when I get back, and should anybody ask what distinguished prelate that is, you can say, 'a bishop from Jersey.'" He found time, however, to examine the manuscripts of Peter Collinson, in which he discovered a letter from Franklin, a number from Bartram, and one very interesting one from Breintnall, thanking Collinson for a gift of books to the Philadelphia Library, and ending, as Mr. Potts says, like Oliver Twist, "asking for more." The National Library in Paris he found better lighted and ventilated, but the attendance was not as

satisfactory. "Once admitted into the British Museum," he writes, "it is a true Republic of Letters, but here one is watched continually by almost every official in the building. A special officer in a cocked hat, with a medal hung by a yellow ribbon on his left breast, walks up and down the room looking over the backs of the readers in a most vigilant manner. If he suspects any action on the part of the student to be the least infraction of the rules, he interrupts him in a way that has very little of traditional French suavity." Both of these letters treat so fully of the administration of these two great libraries, that they deserve to be printed in full, but I must bring this already too extended memoir to a close.

The last letter I received from Mr. Potts was dated three months before his death. He was then very ill, too ill to write himself, but his thoughts were with his friends here and at the Historical Society, and he could not rest until he had called my attention to a valuable collection of manuscripts he desired me to secure for the Historical Society, and had asked me to give my vote and use all the influence I had toward securing the election of a gentleman as Librarian of your Society, whose lineage, ability and long connection with it, made such a selection eminently proper. From the time of his own election as a member in 1885, Mr. Potts valued that membership highly, and I know you will be glad to learn that his interest in the American Philosophical Society ended only with his life.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM JOHN POTTS

TO

FREDERICK D. STONE AND JOHN JORDAN, Jr.

Reading in the British Museum and in the National Library, Paris.

Fictitious Antiquities. How to Make a Mummied Cat, a Scarabæus, etc.

PARIS, FRANCE, January, 1882.

MY DEAR MR. STONE:

On my arrival in Paris some time since, I found an interesting letter from Mr. Jordan, an answer to one I wrote from Ventnor. Please to thank him for me. I shall answer it in a short time. First I think I owe you one. At least, being one of my valued friends, I ought to write to you.

My researches in the British Museum were after all not very satisfactory,—though quite laborious,—owing to the dark fogs of November. The atmosphere in the Reading Room does not at first appear to be so bad, but constant attendance convinced me that the necessary oxygen to keep up the brilliancy of one's intellect is not to be found in an English November, and especially in the badly ventilated Reading Room of this wonderful library. When ventilated at all, a cold draught cuts across one's back from an occasional door being opened in the gallery. I have bought myself a black velvet skull-cap, such as the priests wear to cover their tonsures in the cold European cathedrals. It is a very useful article, and has a most foreign look; and if you have any draughts in the Society's Rooms I shall honor you when I get back, and should anybody ask what distinguished prelate that is, you can say, "A bishop from Jersey!" Though I limited my studies in the British Museum to three hours in the morning, when the atmosphere is less tainted, it soon told on me with a wretched feeling in the head and a still more terrible depression. You know the trite saying about November being the month when "Englishmen hang and drown themselves;" one does not need the aid of study to hasten these events. In describing the same time of year in America, an Englishman, using language *more forcible than elegant*, remarks on the exhilarating effect

of its climate; and says one "feels a disposition to snort like a war-horse." Had I been able to have a little of this "war-horse feeling," what a deal of knowledge might have been laid up for the future pages of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*.

Before leaving America I had studied the pages of the *Catalogue of Additional Manuscripts*, that volume printed in 1877. Another, more detailed, has been issued since, in 1880. I should earnestly advise any one desiring to make researches in the British Museum to study these volumes before going abroad. They are readily attainable in the Philadelphia and Mercantile Libraries. I had a note-book full of the titles of books and MSS., which I wished to consult, with the "Press Marks," which saved infinite time and trouble. There is an admirable work issued by one of the assistants in the British Museum, John Anderson's *Handbook of British Topography*, which is a bibliography of such books in that library. The author devoted his spare time for eighteen years to this work. The Museum copy contains on the margin in MS. the "Press Marks" of the books, which is a great saving of time to the student. These useful MS. aids were only in process of completion in November, 1881. The catalogues of the printed books are in so many voluminous volumes that this is of great service.

I paid more attention before going abroad to the *late printed catalogue* of Additional MSS., but the others are equally valuable, provided the subject has not been a popular one which has often been investigated. The first printed Index of MSS., that of Ayscough (printed in 178[2]). I went over very carefully. It contains the correspondence of Sir Hans Sloane. I noticed, among other letters, one of William Allen, Chief Justice of Pennsylvania. This I did not examine. I think it might repay an investigator, and there are perhaps others recorded under the names alone. I believe I looked for some other Pennsylvania names in which I

was interested, but did not find them. The index to the writers of these particular letters is very brief. An examination of Peter Collinson's MSS., *recently acquired*, was disappointing: though I derived some Americana from them, it was much less than I expected from the wide American acquaintance of that worthy Quaker botanist. This investigation confirmed my former experience: the really valuable narrative and descriptive letters are by some misfortune rarely preserved. I am under the impression that Darlington's printed volume of Bartram's Correspondence contains a number of Collinson's letters. Allibone's references to this English botanist I have not had an opportunity to consult. Bartram's letters to him, Collinson,* in these British Museum volumes are three in number, dated May 29, 1768; November 11, 1772; December 17, 177(7 or 1). The last is probably 1777, as it is to *Michael* Collinson. They are of no value as far as the subject-matter is concerned, and are bad examples of spelling and most ungrammatical English. If my memory serves me, they were written toward the close of the writer's life, and are perhaps excusable, as he was then in old age, when one's failing memory causes errors, even sometimes among the best educated.

There is only one of Cadwalader Colden's, and to my surprise only one of Benjamin Franklin's, which latter was short and of no interest. I copied it entire, however, because it was written at a period in which comparatively few of his letters exist. This is very singular indeed, that none *but this one*, of Franklin's, who was the most scientifically curious of Americans of the last century, and one of the most intimate friends of Collinson's, should have been preserved among the very many which he must have received. The collection savors somewhat of the spirit of that nation "who

* Peter Collinson died August 11, 1768. John Bartram died September 22 1777. The letter which Mr. Potts thinks was written by him in December, 1777, must therefore receive the alternative date, 1771; while only one of the three can have been to *Peter* Collinson.—[Ed.]

dearly love a lord;" for the greater part of them, nine-tenths perhaps, are from several of the chief English nobility to plain Peter Collinson, mercer in Grace Church street. The most are from Lord Petre, with whose family he appears on an intimate social footing. A number are from the Duke of Richmond; many, very chatty and confidential, from H. Fox, one of which, relating to American affairs in 1754, I have copied; and some familiar letters from the Earl of Jersey, etc. Franklin not being at this period, 1767, quite so prominent before Europe as he was a few years later, may account for the fact of so few from his pen having survived in this collection. By the way, I learned from the London *Times* that at the sale of Henry Stevens' books and MSS. in the fall of 1881, the letters of Benjamin Franklin were bought in, it is understood, for seven thousand pounds, by the United States Government. I should like very much to know the period these letters cover, and a few particulars when you are at leisure.

One of the first letters to Collinson was from "Carolina, Jan. 5, 1724–5," which, though unsigned, I have unquestionably identified as that of the Rev. Mark Catesby. There is often a necessity to know the location of an autograph of an author for purposes of identification, and I am sure Catesby's are rare.

These two volumes above described cover the period from 1725 to 1790, the latter part of them to Michael Collinson, the son. The enclosed copy of Joseph Breintnall's letter of thanks to Peter Collinson for a present of books to the Philadelphia Library Company is the gem of the collection. I had some thought of sending it to you for publication in the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, but being so particularly in the department of Mr. Lloyd P. Smith, from whom I have always had much courtesy, I wish you would give it to him *yourself* with my compliments. If he does not keep up the little brochure which he used to publish, and has no other purpose for it, he may be pleased to have it printed in your

magazine. If so, you *can credit me* for it. I wish you would read it first to Mr. Jordan. You can supplement its publication, perhaps, with some items from *Bradford's Gazette* of the day, or the MS. book of the Philadelphia Library Company. I can hardly suppose it has been published. It will be especially flattering to the vanity of our New England friends to learn that in 1732 there was "no good book-shop nearer than Boston." Possibly I have too keen a sense of the ludicrous for an historical man, for I grinned audibly over the elegant period with which Breintnall, rounding off his letter, "asks for more"!!

So much has been said about the rare books that can be occasionally picked up in the well-known book-boxes which line the banks of the Seine. I have prowled there until I ran a great risk of getting chilblains in my feet, and found nothing at a moderate price of any real worth. Only the other day, however, I felt rewarded by lighting on a Chinese book, doubtless from the collection of some Oriental scholar, with whom Paris abounds. Its choice vellum binding and carefully patched leaves, show its former possessor valued it highly. A fly-leaf note in French states it to be a calendar of thirty years of Wang-ly dey Ming,* printed in 1602. My brother made fun of me as I hastened away with the prize. "Très-bon marché!" said the man. "Off a tea-box!" said my brother. Still less sympathy awaited me arriving at my lodgings, hugging the book to my breast, repeating, at least in spirit, the words of the hymn, "Precious treasure, thou art mine," when I was received with the chilling words: "Don't bring that book here; it's buggy!" Knowledge is pursued under difficulties, and I still cling to the book, and shall ask my friends at the British Museum if it is a veritable "Wang-le dey Ming;" and if it is, I shall give it to the Philadelphia Library, for we ought to have a *Wang-le* in that library!

* Wan-leih, an emperor of the Ming dynasty, reigned A.D. 1573-1620.—[Ed.]

To return to the British Museum: I examined the large number of MS. letters of Jacob Tonson, the bookseller, but found no Americana in them. I enclose a few extracts, however, from the long will and other papers of a Samuel Swift, which may be useful to Mr. Hildeburn, who is interested in the Swift pedigree of Pennsylvania, in which Samuel is an early name. Of the *Letters to Secretary Wm. Blaithwayt from 1691 to 1705*, Add. MSS. 21,552, a thin volume, none *appear* to relate to America, or to be from Americans. They are chiefly in French, and I believe, if I recollect aright, were mostly purchased at Puttick & Simpson's sales, and have their printed descriptions attached. There is another collection of letters to Blaithwayt which I did not examine. I hope to do so, if I have time, on my way back.

The Museum Library has received (I understood very recently) the following work of interest to those Pennsylvanians looking up Welsh pedigrees, as it contains genealogies and epitaphs:—Printed Books, "Press Mark" 10,370f: "AN account of the Progress of His Grace Henry, the First of Beaufort, through Wales, 1684, and Notitia Cambro-Britannica. By T. Dineley. Edited from the original MS. in the possession of His Grace the Eighth Duke of Beaufort. By Charles Baker, His Grace's Steward of the Seigniories of Gower and Kilway. Printed for Private Circulation, MDCCCLXIV. 8vo, pp. 284+15." (No Index.) On p. 86, Shrewsbury, there is an epitaph on Thomas Mountgomerie, Gent. of Salop, who died in 1504; Beatrice, his wife, d. 1577. Elizabeth, wife of Richard of Salop, d. 1589: other particulars not copied.

P. 215, Glamorganshire. The coat armor of Bledhyn Manarch, a chevron between three spear-heads or pikes.

P. 219, Morgan arms of Monmouthshire, a griffin rampant. The tinctures, I believe, not given. These are the same arms borne by Dr. John Morgan, of Philadelphia, in the last century. The above hasty notes, taken in making an exam-

ination for other things, may be of service to some one. I may have made a mistake in the date of the printing of this book, for I certainly understood that the present Duke of Beaufort had only just given it. I can hardly suppose any copies will reach Pennsylvania.

The enclosed eloquent and interesting speech, entitled "William Penn's Speech to the King at Windsor, May 24th, 1687, when he delivered the Quakers' Address," and the king's reply, may not have been printed: the assistant at the Museum did not think they were, so I copied them without looking up Penn's life to see. If they are really unpublished, I can print them with notes in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* on my return. Being in another department when I made these copies, and far away from the printed books, and having called for reserved valuable MSS., I thought it advisable to take them down, as I might not have another chance.

I have referred to the difficulty of picking up any valuable books at moderate prices in Paris. I found the same to be the case at numerous bookstalls in London, Germany, and in fact throughout Europe generally.

In a letter to a friend I have described some of my antiquarian experiences which may interest you. The wave of taste for bric-a-brac and such kindred subjects is quite a renaissance, for it extends to Norway, Sweden, Finland, St. Petersburg and Moscow, the different parts of Italy we have been in, and to Egypt and Spain, also of course to France and Germany. Stores for the sale of such things are common, often in small towns where one would not expect to see them. Fictitious antiquities are in force to supply the demand. These things are not without their amusing side. On the Nile the great number of travelers creates innumerable scarabæi. At Luxor especially, one of our countrymen is said to have a manufactory. The Arabs there surround the steamer with perhaps from ten to twenty scarabæi each,

offering them for sale to the ignorant voyager, beginning with a good price of several pounds, and dropping to ten or twenty cents. Only one in ten is said to be genuine. A friend saw an Englishman pay as high as sixty dollars for one. When they are genuine and fine, they sometimes bring even more. It is often said these things are made in Birmingham, which is not creditable to the ability of the Arabs, who make very good ones themselves without waiting for English or American assistance. As we were entering the main hall of the temple of Karnac, we came suddenly upon an Arab carving something with his knife, upon which our guide asked him to show it to us. With a sheepish look, and then a smile, he produced a very pretty scarabæus cut out of a semi-translucent green stone, telling us in a few words of English, that the cartouche cut upon it was copied from a real one among the ruins. Looking at the man's coarse, brawny hands, and the miserable knife with a single blade, I had a disposition to purchase the scarabæus, and began a haggle with Yussuf, who started with ten francs and dropped, after a short argument, to ten cents. I said I was willing to give that much, the price of a day's labor in Egypt. If I recollect correctly, I made the guide ask him how many he could make in a day, and think he said, "Two"—offering the man some piastres, which I honestly thought represented that sum. I found afterward that I had made a mistake, and unwittingly tendered him depreciated currency. He went off very indignantly, evidently thinking I had broken *my word* and tried to cheat him; for, put an Arab on his honor, he is most trustworthy. Karnac is some two miles out of Luxor, and though I sent word afterwards that I would give a franc, Yussuf was nowhere to be found, and the interesting incident of his skill was all I had to take away from the regretful memory of the lost scarabæus.

Arab ingenuity is, however, best displayed in mummied

cats. I will give you the receipt. *To make a mummied cat:* no cat is required at all. Take a stick the length of a European tabby, wrap some genuine mummy cloth around it, of which there is plenty "lying round loose," and envelope the stick to the desired consistency. Take two smaller sticks, insert them in juxtaposition on the main stick, and go through the same process with the cloth, and you have a good pair of ears. Taper for the nose a little. If the color of the cloth is not done to a sufficient antiquity, a little tobacco-juice gives a finish that would deceive the Great Rameses himself. Over all place a few hieroglyphics with a paint-brush, and your cat is "done brown," and finds ready sale at two francs each. Positively given away at a franc and a half! An Arab might write an essay on the virtues of tobacco-juice. It seems to have deceived a whole continent. Murray says about fifty years ago some grains of wheat were brought to Europe which were found in the wrappings of a mummy, planted, and grew again to life after so many thousand years' burial. This wheat was of quite recent origin, and had been stained with tobacco-juice and disinterred at the proper moment to deceive the unwary European. It is a pity such a beautiful illustration of immortality should be the invention of man.

I cannot close this letter without a few remarks on the prompt recognition of your introduction to the acting official at the British Museum, "The Secretary." The printed rules state that one must have the letters of *two* householders, or a "*person of known position:*" these are the words. I conclude that the Librarian of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania must be a great personage. Twenty minutes after I gave your letter (Mr. Stevens's not being even asked for, though I said I could get one from him), I was sitting at one of the desks in that profound library, a "*Reader for life*"—only think of it!—the great dome above, twenty thousand reference volumes surrounding me, two assistants

crowding round me, smiling most graciously and asking, "How many would I like to have?"—one million three hundred thousand printed books waiting to be called for, with many thousands of manuscripts. Mr. B. F. Stevens received Mr. Jordan's letter very courteously, and offered to do anything for me. I went to the Museum, not supposing for a moment that my application would be immediately granted, especially as Mr. Stevens said they were very particular, and often refused applicants: not one in ten were admitted. The great charm of the library is the aid given the reader, which is carried out by a large staff of assistants. The Public Library of Boston, having plenty of funds and a large corps, is the nearest approach to it I know of. The four electric lights are hung about twenty feet from the floor. They give a *most steady* clear light.

I wish you would call the attention of Mr. Bledhyn Powell to the Duke of Beaufort's Visitation of Wales.

I enclose an extract from Galignani's *Messenger*, which answers my questions as to Franklin's letters, which I know will interest you. If you can find time to write, my address will be, until the latter part of April: Care of J. S. Morgan & Co., 22, Old *Broad* Street, London, England. With my best wishes for you and all my friends, I am,

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM JOHN POTTS.

FREDERICK D. STONE, Esq.,
Librarian Hist. Soc. Penna., Philadelphia.

PARIS, FRANCE, March, 1882.

Dear Sir:—Thank you very much for your letter, which I have already acknowledged some time since in one to Mr. Fred. D. Stone.

It was quite interesting to hear of the valuable additions to the Historical Society's Library. Viewing our country from a distance, one sees a rapid increase and a coming era of American Literature, historical as well as general.

Mr. Charles Dudley Warner, in his preliminary chapter to his Biography of Washington Irving, in the new series of *American Men of Letters*, shares my opinion ; and you will, I suppose, be interested in his estimate of the character and style of the writings of Charles Brockden Brown, the Philadelphian, and his keen analysis of the general tone of American literature in the present century.

I hope there has been a noticeable increase in the students and attendance at the Library. The influence of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, which has now been some years before the public, must have had such an effect.

My letter to Mr. Stone did not by any means contain a reference to all the letters copied at the British Museum, though I regret my labors there were shortened for the reasons mentioned.

In conversation I once spoke to Mr. Stone of certain letters to (?) Samuel Wharton about the Revolutionary period. These, on examination, proved to be almost entirely in cypher.

The French National Library has one great advantage over the English : it is much better ventilated, though occasionally draughty. Lighted by nine domes or sky-lights, as well as a large section near the roof, the light is fully as good as that of the British Museum in its bright days. Though I have not attended here on the misty, gloomy days, which at their worst are much superior to the English climate, I have not noticed any apparatus for electric lights, nor do I believe it was necessary. These lights are common enough in the streets, however, at night.

The class of readers, judging the average from their intellectual appearance, their dress and air, seem to be much higher than those in London. A well-to-do Frenchman is much more careless of his apparel than an Englishman in comfortable circumstances. I have not noticed *one* blouse in the room : they are numerous about the city. The letters

" R. F." (*République Française*), surrounded by rays, are conspicuously blazoned in very large type on the title-pages of the later catalogues. A Republic that does not read, however, is a doubtful one. The Imperial " N " used to be stamped on everything in France, and it takes time, I suppose, for the effect to wear off. The erasures or removal from many of the public buildings of this detested symbol, and the substitution, on all these and all the churches, of the words, *Liberté*, *Egalité*, *Fraternité*, in large, black letters, is very striking.

It has been repeatedly stated by writers who know France well, that only Frenchmen of the highest rank are general readers, while the mass of the people are very ignorant about subjects out of their own country. Therefore I ought not to have been surprised at the sort of people I saw in the Library, especially as my slight experience confirms in other ways the above-mentioned statements. It may be that the rules of entrance are such that the general public are excluded, for there exists in the administration an absurd amount of formality. Once admitted to the British Museum, it is a true " Republic of Letters." Here one is watched continually by almost every official in the building. A special officer in a cocked hat, with a medal hung by a yellow ribbon on his left breast, walks up and down the room, looking over the backs of the readers in a most vigilant manner. If he suspects any action on the part of the student to be in the least an infraction of the rules, he interrupts him in a way that has very little of traditional French suavity. To-day was the second instance within a week that I saw him sharply interrupt a reader, this time a lady, for there are a few of the other sex to be seen there, not more than four or five at the most. In London I saw several times as many. Two other cocked hats and numerous attendants add to the solemnity of this apartment.

The French say, " Eternal vigilance is the price of lib-

erty." Harrisse, in his *Americana Vetustissima*, 2d vol., Paris, 1872, p. xi, gives such an interesting account of his experiences in foreign researches, which, though a long extract, I give in full, for it makes me believe that such great care is necessary. I read it in this library, and it took away from the disagreeable feeling of so much *surveillance:* "The Continental Libraries were, a quarter of a century ago, richer in important works relating to America than they are at present. The first and fourth *Columbus* letters and three Latin *Vespucci* have disappeared in the last fifteen years from the Royal Library at Munich; the *Columbus* of the Casatenense, the Vespuccius in the Escorial, and the illustrated *Columbus* in the Brera, have been stolen, but the latter was certainly taken prior to the inventory made in 1841. Several Vespucci have also disappeared from the Paris public libraries. The descriptions in the Catalogues are not sufficiently minute to enable us to define all the editions, but there is no doubt that the copy stolen from the Paris National Library was a *Hupfuff*, whilst one of those taken from the Mazarine was a *Gilles de Gourmont.* The Columbina, at Sevilla, once possessed the following works, the description of which we copy from the catalogue written by Fernando Columbus himself. . . . . (eleven titles given). All these works, with nearly ten thousand more, have long since disappeared from the Biblioteca Colombina." The writer, in a footnote, speaks of the rarity of "the Epistles of Columbus," and on page xxii, after speaking of the number of letters existing *relating* to Americus Vespuccius, apparently commemorates another theft: "As to the well-known letter written by Americus to his father in October, 1476, first discovered by Bandini in the Strozzi library, it now graces M. Feuillet de Conches' private collection in Paris. This and two or three signatures added to receipts which were brought to light by Navarrete, constitute the only autographs of Vespuccius known."

I may do this French collector injustice: the letter might have been sold by the Strozzi family, for the Italian families have sold many things. However, it is interesting, showing how rare letters of Vespucci have become. Only within the last month a statement has appeared in the English Press, that extremely valuable letters of Napoleon and others, known to have been stolen from the Library at Milan, are advertised for sale in London. The Italian ambassador telegraphed to his government on the subject, and was informed they were powerless to claim them, but was authorized to bid a large sum at the sale.

To return to the great National Library of France. The three principal librarians are enthroned at a high circular desk at the head of the room. They are generally formal in their manner and very particular about the giving out and receiving of the ordinary cards of application for each book. One of these gentlemen, a M. Béranger, speaks excellent English, and I have been particularly indebted to his courtesy.

I am not aware of the method by which the Parisians obtain a ticket of entrance. On application in another part of the building, after passing several officials, I was told I might have a card for one day only; after that, an introduction from the American minister would gain me admittance for a specified time. Through the kindness of my friend, Mr. Thomas H. Dudley, I obtained a letter to Mr. L. P. Morton, whom I found a very creditable representative. His introduction readily gained entrance for both my brother and myself for a period of six months, which can be renewed at the end of that time, if desired. "Life tickets" are not given here, as they are occasionally, though not generally, in the British Museum. The Reading Room has been nearly full of readers every time I have visited it, except an hour or two after ten o'clock, at which time it opens. It seats 324 persons.

There is no general catalogue, printed or manuscript, to

which the public are admitted, unless we except the many little volumes with titles on printed slips pasted in them, called *Ouvrages Étrangers reçus depuis 1871*, each volume labeled with the subject: Biography, Science, etc. In both London and Berlin there is one in MS. The individual books, Brunet, Lorenz, Denis and Pinçon (French *Allibones*), are the actual catalogue. All of them, as you know, have a list of subjects at the end, and are very useful; but some knowledge of bibliography is presumed to be possessed by the reader by the multiplication of such books. There is also the weekly bulletin, *Bibliographie de la France*, bound in annual volumes. I think the alphabetical card-catalogue system, which is used at Harvard, in the Boston Public Library, the Astor, and in the Philadelphia, superior. My knowledge of French is perhaps too limited to be critical of the attendants, but they certainly appear to be mere carriers of books, and do not render the assistance of those at the British Museum. Only twelve applications for books are allowed in a day, two cards at a time. If there are several volumes in the set asked for, they are included in the one demand, however. In the British Museum you can have as many as you like. In the early morning it takes about half an hour to get a book; later in the day, when readers are numerous, from forty minutes to an hour, sometimes longer. I met an Englishman there last July who complained bitterly that he had waited an hour and a half for a book. He informed me there was "entirely too much of what *we* call '*red tape*,'" as if I was unacquainted with the word.

The works of reference in the room itself, free of access to the reader without the slow process of a card, number three thousand; those in London, twenty thousand. The English have a useful handbook of *bibliographies* accessible in their Reading Room, an admirable volume in which I was proud to see a number of American works. It is also very creditable to the state of the literature of so young a nation as ours,

L. of C.

that the *one* large case in the Reading Room of the National French Library containing only bibliographies should have Allibone, Harrisse's two volumes of *Americana Vetustissima*, his *Nouvelle France*, and Rich's two books,* Great Britain being represented only by the volumes of Watts, Lowndes, and Darling, the Royal Society's *Catalogue of Scientific Papers*, and the *Universal Catalogue of Books on Art*, 2 vols., 1870.

Our old friend Sabin, perhaps, if he were living, would not feel complimented that the French could do without his *Dictionary of Books relating to America* in the Reading Room, and in his critical spirit he might repeat the German saying that "a Frenchman is a person who wears mustaches and does not know anything about geography."

I enclose the card of application for books, also that given up at the door when the reader leaves. It is presented to him a blank by an official in a cocked hat, as he enters the room. This man has the "eternal vigilance" principle by heart: he looks you well over as you come in and go out, and if not perfectly familiar with your face, demands your admission card very promptly and stiffly. On the paper you leave with him, you have to write your name and address before you ask for books; then, when the books are about ready, an attendant comes and picks up your paper, and goes away with it to the librarian's desk, and his secretary writes out the number, titles and size of the books on the blank lines. When you return your volumes at this desk, the word *rendu* is stamped in red ink after each title, when all are counted, and you deposit this paper with the guardian above-mentioned when you go away for the day.

The blank card which I enclose is that of the card-catalogue, to which the public are not admitted. The shape is such that a number can be more quickly handled than the

* Ternaux's *Bibliothèque Américaine* is the only other bibliography in this case on American subjects, but that is not by an American author. —[W. J. P.]

oblong form, but the easier reading of the title and author's name on the latter are to my mind superior advantages. The penmanship on two of these catalogue cards which I saw was not by any means as legible as those in the American libraries spoken of. The generality of French penmanship, it has often been said, is bad—much inferior to ours, as ours in turn is inferior to the English.

No books are given out after three ; at that hour the large clock over the door, which is silent at other times, strikes three sharp sudden strokes, with a half-military air, like everything else connected with the establishment, as though it said, " Attention, Company !'' and there is a visible sensation among the readers. At four the room is closed.

There is, I think, one mistake in this French system beside the formalities mentioned. The manuscripts have to be examined in another room upstairs, a long distance off. It often happens that the student, while consulting them, desires to have printed books about him, which he cannot do here. The British Museum in this has the advantage : there, both printed books and MSS. can be consulted in the same room. To this may be excepted certain very choice examples under the head of " Select,'' which are placed in a distant apartment ; even there, however, I noticed *some* printed books.

The Manuscript Room in the National French Library is small, holding under fifty people. It was crowded, and here I saw two ladies. I should have mentioned that on *one* occasion in the large Reading Room I counted more ladies than I have noted previously in this letter. There were thirteen.

One reason of the class of people who attend this library being of one sort chiefly, is perhaps the fact that there are numerous other libraries in Paris. A writer in the New York *Times*, Sunday edition, Feb. 19, in an article apparently carefully written, speaks of certain ones frequented by students of the law and medical professions, etc., as follows : " The

Salles de lecture are circulating-library reading-rooms, and abound in the neighborhood of the Sorbonne and the Odéon. Admission to them is generally five cents, and for that modest sum you can read books and papers a whole evening. The trouble about these little institutions is that the book you want is almost certain to be 'out,' and then the ventilation is very wretched. The *Sainte Geneviève*, the free public library of the quarter, is open daily from 10 to 3, and from 6 to 10. It is the resort of the studious, the poor, the sleepy, and the cold. In the evening the fair sex is, for evident good reasons, unmercifully excluded. The *Sainte Geneviève* is remarkable for its fine collections, its poor catalogues, its learned librarians, who are generally absent, and its poorly paid assistants, who might be absent also and nobody feel the want of them. There is a guard at the *Geneviève* who is as much of a study as any Elzevir in the library. He is an aged soldier, dressed in sober blue. He has a cap on his head and a sword at his side. He paces regularly along the waxed floor of the library, and keeps his eye on the readers at the long green-covered tables. He is quick to reprimand the noisy, and inexorable toward the man who dozes and gently snores over the books before him."

Until I read the following extract from a Boston newspaper in 1876, I was unaware that the French capital possessed so many libraries, as we hear only of the great one. "Paris Libraries. A recent enumeration of the books and manuscripts gives the following result. The Library of the Arsenal contains 200,000 printed volumes and 8000 manuscripts; The Sorbonne, 80,000 volumes; the School of Medicine, 35,000 volumes; the National Library, 1,700,000 volumes, 8000 manuscripts, 1,000,000 copper-plates and maps, and 120,000 medals; the Mazarin Library, 200,000 printed books, 4000 manuscripts, 80 reliefs and plaster monuments; and the Sainte Geneviève Library, 160,000, and 35,000 manuscripts."

Since writing the foregoing, I have spoken to M. Béranger, the Librarian, about the superiority of the class of readers in the French National Library to those in London, and he said I was correct; it had often been noticed before, and he mentioned Professor Loomis (my fellow-countryman, I suppose) being of the same opinion.

Speaking of books being stolen, he said this Library lost many fine miniatures on vellum, cut out of illuminated manuscripts; many of these were found in a certain collection of one of the best-known French names; I shall not mention it. He did not charge the individual with stealing them; but somebody stole them, and they were taken in a curious way. The thief used what appeared to be a lead pencil. Where the lead ought to be, was a sharp steel blade, which cut into the vellum and easily detached the craved objects. After hearing this story and adding it to Harrisse's statement, I have gone over to the "Eternal Vigilance" party, and I believe, as I have lately made friends with the cocked hats, that I approve of everything in this library but the want of a catalogue and the time it takes to deliver books. Certainly the first and chief thing in every library is the possession and preservation of the volumes; all other things are secondary.

The British Museum must lose many of its treasures. The desks come up in front of the reader, completely hiding him from the person who is reading on the other side, and also making his books hidden from observation beyond some distance; while in France, there are flat table-desks quite open; the reader and all he has can be seen not only by the person sitting opposite, but from all parts of the room, so that the students can keep a watch on each other.

All things being considered, this enclosed *Bulletin Personnel*, which is delivered at the door, is a positive necessity and a most useful check against stealing. I send you also the ticket of application for books at the British Museum,

which, when the reader has finished reading, is given to him when he returns the volumes to the officials at the central desk. The Royal Library at Berlin uses a somewhat similar application ticket, which is, however, not printed, but written out entirely with pen and ink by the student on blank slips of paper. There is no *Bulletin Personnel*, and, the applications for books being made, they must be handed in before twelve o'clock, and not until that hour are they searched for by the librarian's attendants: then the rules are such that they are not to be delivered until one, no matter whether they can be had in ten minutes or not. This library closes at four, so that unless you have your books kept over night *en bloc*, so as to have them next morning at ten when the room is open, most of the day is gone before you can get to work. Though the officials have the true German courtesy and good breeding, the state of affairs seems very primitive. The Reading Room is very small, and quite behind the age in its accommodations. The Royal Library at Munich I regret very much I did not visit more often, for I was some weeks there. The one day I read in the Library for a short time I noticed the room was much superior to that of the Prussian capital. There are no reading-rooms, however, in any of the great libraries so beautiful as those in the French National Library and the British Museum, nor any which impress the reader so much as regards the great army of workers who daily are to be seen there. There cannot be the slightest doubt that these rivals have a most perceptible influence on modern thought and research which is felt throughout Europe. The importance of the subject, therefore, must be my excuse for having detained you with so long a letter, and for entering into those practical details which I hope may be interesting to you. They are the little matters which I have often wanted to know myself, but have never found them in Edwards *On Libraries* or similar works. In the French Library I saw but one person I recognized as an American; there

were a number of Englishmen. If one wants to see his fellow-countrymen seriously occupied in Paris, he must go to the milliners' shops, the theatres or the races. I never remember, though, to have seen so few Americans in this city; there were more in 1866, '67 and '68. A writer in Galignani's *Messenger* makes the same remark, stating they stay now in many other parts of Europe, having been driven away by the cheating and extortion of the rapacious Parisians.

Please to thank Mr. Stone for his interesting letter lately received. It was very kind in him to send me such an agreeable reply, as I know perfectly well how busy he is. I feel now from his letter and yours as if I had a pretty general *résumé* of the accessions to the Society during my absence, and look forward with considerable pleasure to examining them. I hope to write a short answer to Mr. Stone when I return to London. Please to thank him also for Mr. Hildeburn's bibliographical pamphlet, which is quite useful as well as entertaining. The enclosed notes, which may be serviceable to Mr. Hildeburn, I wish you would read and hand to him.

In a day or two, I shall send by registered post, in your name, two volumes of Oldendorp's *Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder auf den caraïbischen Inseln S. Thomas, S. Croix und S. Jan*, etc., 1777. The title says "Mit Sieben Kupferstalen," but this contains only four. Should the Society possess a copy of this work, I wish you to accept it for your personal library.

With regards and remembrances to all my friends, I am

Very truly yours,

William John Potts.

John Jordan, Jr.,
Historical Society, 820 Spruce Street,
Philadelphia.

P.S.—In justice to the National Library, I should state

that I have just discovered there is a free reading-room in one of the wings of the building entered at No. 3 Rue Colbert. It has the same hours and method of administration as its chief on the Rue Richelieu. The collection of books, however, appears small, and is of a much inferior character to the great reading-room. The catalogue in manuscript is here accessible, and it is very well arranged. The character of the readers also is totally different. I noticed one man in a blouse and a number of workmen, also four ladies in a room which seats 112 persons, and was nearly crowded—only a few vacant seats left. This crowd may be exceptional, as to-day the "Great Reading Room" is closed, and readers are referred to this. The same *Bulletin Personnel* is used, and no one, on *any pretense whatever*, is allowed to pass without giving it up. The *Bulletin de Demande* is much the same. I enclose a copy.

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